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SURVEY OF CALIFORNIA PUBLIC LIBRARIES

1978 - 1980

BEFORE AND AFTER PROPOSITION 13

California State Library

November 1979

Ethel S. Crockett, State Librarian

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Introduction

On June 6, 1978, the passage of California's Proposition 13 tax limitation initiative reduced that portion of the income of public libraries for the coming fiscal year derived from local property taxes by 62%, sending budgets and services into a decline from which they have not yet recovered, and may never recover.

In September 1978 the California State Library, with the cooperation of the California Library Association, surveyed public libraries to determine what effects Proposition 13 was having on library services in that fiscal year, 1978-79. Published in December as Special Survey of California Public Libraries, the investigation found a 22% reduction in library service hours, 21% cut in staffing, and 20% cut in funds for materials.

A year has now passed. We have actual figures for 1979, and estimates for 1980, so it is now possible to survey the status of California public libraries over a three year span: 1978, the last year of "full funding"; 1979, the year of Proposition 13 shock; and 1980, the year of transition and uncertainty. (For ease of presentation the single figure, e.g. 1980, is printed; what is meant by that is the state and local fiscal year running from July 1979 through June 1980.) Data were obtained from the annual public library reports to the State Library, and include information from all but eight city, one county and one district libraries, serving the smallest populations.

Library financial statistics for the three year period, 1978-1980, present the picture of a wave trough. The peak on the left, 1978, the year before Proposition 13, is followed by the dip of 1979, in which the first effects of reduction on the order of one-quarter were felt. For 1980, libraries moved much of the way up the other side of the trough to regain almost the dollar position they held two years ago.

But how real is this recovery? During the two year period we have suffered a 25% erosion in the buying power of the dollar through inflation. A 1% increase in expenditure for 1980 over 1978 is actually a 24% decrease in purchasing power.

A state budget surplus in the billions of dollars was released to local governments for both 1979 and 1980, to help offset the immediate effects of Proposition 13. This did help libraries, providing about 12% of their income for 1980. The actual dollar amount of state relief funds in public library budgets cannot be accurately stated, because the provisions of the state relief bills did not tie the money specifically to services, in most cases, and great discretion was given to county boards of supervisors and city councils in allocating funds. Although $24 million in state relief funds is specifically identified in library budgets for 1980, the overall state assistance to local government services, including libraries, is greater than that.

Predictions are that this state relief will not continue. State surplus funds are largely gone, and with the combination of national recession and the 1979 Proposition 4 spending limit it is unlikely that they can or will be rebuilt.

In 1979 and 1980 libraries have drawn 8% of their income from federal sources, largely general revenue sharing funds and CETA staff assistance, but continuation of these is also very uncertain. To the extent of 5% each year libraries have been living off their own reserves and carryover funds, which again cannot continue indefinitely.

Unless some new plan is approved at the state or national level, our public libraries appear to be stabilizing at about 25% less in real income compared to 1978.

The number of library outlets (branches, stations, and mobile library stops), and the hours these outlets are open for public service has declined in both years of the survey. The number of library outlets has gone from 3,857 in 1978 to 3,245 in 1979 to 3,027 in 1980, a 22% drop in two years. The drop in hours open for service is 23%. Many libraries are no longer open during morning hours, and may be closed weekends and several evenings per week.

Library staff lost during 1979 have not been rehired in most areas. There are 705 fewer persons employed in libraries in 1980 than there were in 1979, and that year saw a drop of 1,806 persons over 1978. The change statewide is down 18% for 1980 from the staffing levels of 1978. Part-time staff were the first to go in many libraries, reducing the flexibility of scheduling and forcing the reduction in hours and closing of outlets. During the past 18 months reports were received of long lines of patrons at the checkout counters, piles of unshelved books, and backlogs in overdues, reserves, processing and other tasks.

In one area only have libraries improved. The use of volunteers is up 282%. Some library outlets are staffed now only by volunteers, as paid staff members have been laid off. Library administrators recognize the values of volunteerism, but have expressed their concerns about volunteers as staffing for basic library services.

Funds for library materials, which dropped 17% for 1979, are back to within 1% in 1980 of what they were two years ago, not accounting for inflation. The acquisitions lost to libraries will in some measure never be recovered, for future large scale retrospective purchasing appears unlikely and missing titles will soon go out of print. With the combination of fewer library hours and fewer materials it is perhaps surprising that circulation is down no more than 12% and reference service down 8% for 1979.

California public libraries today are still an important community cultural and educational presence, a $200 million operation. The problem remains how to provide the excellent library services California citizens expect given the limited amount of society's resources currently available to libraries.

Collin Clark, Information Manager
Library Development Services Bureau
California State Library

SURVEY OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES, OCTOBER, 1979

Statewide summary

Page 1: Operating income, Local, State

Public libraries by type of jurisdiction	all local sources			Change, 1980 over 1978
	1978	1979	1980	
City	$ 82,378,611	$ 78,335,907	$ 78,152,222	- 5%
County	75,878,397	45,521,056	51,633,312	- 32%
Combination	15,785,065	11,848,993	14,011,187	- 11%
District	5,310,852	2,540,305	2,916,025	- 45%
State total	$179,352,925	$138,246,261	$146,712,746	- 18%

Public libraries by type of jurisdiction	1978	state sources		state sources	
		1979 Relief	1979 CLSA	1980 Relief	1980 CLSA
City	Not applicable	$ 613,658	$ 858,627	$ 1,964,931	$ 951,026
County		13,687,813	219,247	20,316,257	333,462
Combination		1,313,341	14,795	1,086,713	31,508
District		1,108,166	13,799	816,873	19,200
State total		$16,922,978	$1,106,468	$24,184,774	$1,335,196

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Page 2: Operating income, Federal, Total

Public libraries by type of jurisdiction	Federal sources			Carryover, reserves		
	1978	1979	1980	1978	1979	1980
City	$12,318,706	$11,180,623	$14,241,158	$5,242,158	$ 2,815,927	$ 3,291,079
County	1,123,235	3,496,442	1,746,588	3,743,462	3,722,451	4,287,252
Combination	38,932	52,832	31,070	337,226	1,838,125	1,013,849
District	-0-	7,133	28,802	301,807	1,727,894	2,202,010
State total	$13,480,873	$14,737,030	$16,047,618	$9,624,555	$10,104,397	$10,794,190

Public libraries by type of jurisdiction	Total available operating income			Change, 1980 over 1978
	1978	1979	1980	
City	$ 99,939,377	$ 94,004,742	$ 98,600,416	- 1%
County	80,745,094	66,647,451	78,316,871	- 3%
Combination	16,161,223	15,068,086	16,170,019	± 0
District	5,612,659	5,397,297	5,982,910	+ 6%
State total	$202,458,353	$181,117,576	$199,070,216	- 2%

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Page 3: Operating expenditure

Public libraries by type of jurisdiction	All library materials			Staff salaries & benefits		
	1978	1979	1980	1978	1979	1980
City	$13,735,410	$12,107,969	$14,419,878	$ 65,641,322	$ 62,927,918	$ 66,978,964
County	10,805,705	8,449,371	10,277,854	47,917,929	42,296,944	47,484,167
Combination	2,384,234	1,855,858	2,194,374	10,036,217	8,736,072	10,168,774
District	764,467	414,515	564,805	3,346,909	2,113,781	2,477,402
State total	$27,689,816	$22,827,713	$27,456,911	$126,942,377	$116,074,715	$127,109,307

Public libraries by type of jurisdiction	Total operating expenditure			Change, 1980 over 1978
	1978	1979	1980	
City	$ 94,670,814	$ 90,348,400	$ 97,717,986	+ 3%
County	78,371,081	67,450,788	77,698,482	- 1%
Combination	15,894,280	13,820,256	15,847,353	± 0
District	5,303,483	3,375,614	4,244,358	- 20%
State total	$194,239,658	$174,995,058	$195,508,179	+ 1%

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Page 4: Staffing

Public libraries by type of jurisdiction	Staff total count / Staff FTE			Change, 1980 over 1978
	1978	1979	1980	
City	6,851 / 4,779.44	6,500 / 4,627.22	5,732 / 4,605.55	Count -16%; FTE -4%
County	5,342 / 3,710.57	4,441 / 3,176.39	4,444 / 3,173.92	Count -17%; FTE -14%
Combination	1,072 / 718.15	685 / 566.98	737 / 616.36	Count -31%; FTE -14%
District	359 / 274.74	192 / 144.57	200 / 155.89	Count -42%; FTE -43%
State total	13,624 / 9,482.9	11,818 / 8,515.16	11,113 / 8,551.72	Count -18%; FTE -10%

Public libraries by type of jurisdiction	Volunteer hours per week			Change, 1980 over 1978
	1978	1979	1980	
City	2,908	3,606	7,746	+ 266%
County	1,065	1,218	2,402	+ 226%
Combination	48	230	738	+ 1,538%
District	38	27	564	+ 1,484%
State total	4,059	5,081	11,450	+ 282%

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Page 5: Outlets; activities

Public libraries by type of jurisdiction	Total library outlets			Change, 1980 over 1978	Libraries open for service Total hours per week			Change, 1980 over 1978
	1978	1979	1980		1978	1979	1980	
City	1,221	918	984	- 19%	19,776	17,528	16,259	- 18%
County	1,960	1,716	1,457	- 26%	25,443	21,865	18,536	- 27%
Combination	612	563	533	- 13%	4,666	4,151	3,664	- 21%
District	64	48	53	- 17%	1,051	720	691	- 33%
State total	3,857	3,245	3,027	- 22%	50,936	44,264	39,150	- 23%

Public libraries by type of jurisdiction	Total circulation			Change, 1979 over 1978	Reference transactions			Change, 1979 over 1978
	1978	1979	1980		1978	1979	1980	
City	62,717,269	54,922,726	Not applicable	- 12%	25,646,323	24,255,026	Not applicable	- 5%
County	50,269,657	44,257,329		- 12%	7,801,494	6,649,656		- 15%
Combination	10,178,880	8,847,928		- 13%	1,158,819	940,507		- 19%
District	2,748,989	2,256,515		- 18%	88,923	88,459		- 1%
State total	125,914,795	110,284,498		- 12%	34,695,559	31,933,648		- 8%